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seem important. For instance, the psychiatrist's values concerning who should be treated appear to influence the acceptance of patients. Also, lower class persons do not seem to share with psychiatrists the conception of therapy as a process by which the patient gains insight into his problems. Frequently, such patients conceive of the therapist's role in magical terms.

Psychotherapy involves intimate communicative interaction between the patient and therapist. Therefore it may be facilitated if a certain similarity in culturally determined symbols and learned drives exist in both patient and therapist. Differences in value systems and patterns of communication, on the other hand, may hamper the establishment of the therapeutic relationship. At present, it appears possible that lower-class patients need to acquire new symbols and values to participate in expressive psychotherapy. Since this is a difficult process, many of them may be considered unpromising candidates for successful treatment. According to the clinic's staff they often "lack motivation for psychotherapy" or are not "psychologically minded." Perhaps psychiatrists need to acquire new symbols and values in dealing with lower class patients; or perhaps new approaches are necessary to bring psychotherapy to such persons.

A STUDY OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION USING AN AREA SAMPLE OF RATERS *

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IT is the purpose of this study to examine empirically, within the confines of a selected community, the conceptions of social stratification as described by an area sample of community members.

It has been the practice in empirical studies of social stratification for the researcher to select a group of raters or judges on the basis of qualifying criteria such as length of residence in the community or breadth of acquaintance with members of the community.[1] The implicit assumption in such studies is that some persons are better qualified than others to judge the social status of their fellow townsmen. With one noteworthy exception,[2] these studies have found that a distinct stratification pattern did indeed exist, and that it consisted of a fixed number of social strata. Such a pattern, however useful or accurate it may be, is the pattern as seen *from the perspective of the raters.* As the qualifications of the raters are increased in number, the perspective becomes more limited.

In constrast, the basic assumption of this study is that effective status judgments may be made by any or all members of a community who are in interaction, and that these judgments may furnish at least a partial basis for differential attitudes and behavior toward different categories of community members. Such a premise necessitated the use of a minimum number of qualifications for the selection of raters. Raters were therefore chosen at regular intervals from an ordered geographical pattern of dwellings.

"Social stratification pattern" was tentatively defined as an ideal construct of a

* Paper read at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Society, August, 1953.

[1] August B. Hollingshead, *Elmtown's Youth: The Impact of Social Classes on Adolescents,* New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1949; Gerhard E. Lenski, "American Social Classes: Statistical Strata or Social Groups?" *American Journal of Sociology,* LVIII (September, 1952), pp. 139–144; Raymond W. Mack, "Housing as an Index of Social Class," *Social Forces,* 29 (May, 1951), pp. 391–400; W. Lloyd Warner, Marchia Meeker, and Kenneth Eells, *Social Class in America: A Manual of Procedure for the Measurement of Social Status,* Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1949; James West, *Plainville, U.S.A.,* New York: Columbia University Press, 1945; and Wayne Wheeler, *Social Stratification in a Plains Community,* Minneapolis: Wayne Wheeler, 1949.

[2] Lenski, *op. cit.*

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social aggregation which distinguishes categories of persons as generally inferior or superior to one another.

The community chosen for study is here called Citrus City, a fictitious name. It is a city of about 4,200 people, located in the great valley below the Sierra Madre range in Southern California. Citrus City was not chosen as a typical American community, if such can be said to exist. However, the ability of the citizens, who were born elsewhere in the United States for the most part, to live together without overt conflict, their acceptance of the general moral and cultural patterns, their very ability to communicate, all give evidence of a strain toward cultural homogeneity in American social organization. To that extent Citrus City is representative of the small town in the United States.

After some preliminary experimentation, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

(1) There exists no uniform set of clearly defined criteria by means of which the citizens of Citrus City judge the social strata of which their fellows are constituents.

(2) There is no generally recognized number of social strata in Citrus City.

(3) There is no community consensus on the relative social strata of which a sizeable number of the residents of Citrus City should be constituents.

A sample of fifty-six persons was interviewed. Without any special instructions other than that a study of social life in Citrus City was being made, they were asked to describe the "social classes" in the community, to nominate persons whom they believed to be representative of each "class," and to tell how they thought persons became identified with each of the "classes."

The number of social strata indicated by the respondents ranged from one (or none) to seven, with no one number being chosen by more than seventeen per cent of the respondents.

A total of 410 persons were named, from one to thirteen times each, as typical constituents of the several categories described. The great majority of the nominees were mentioned only once. Of the thirty persons who were nominated more than once, sixteen (53 per cent) were placed in the same relative stratum each time. In each of the sixteen cases, this was the uppermost stratum supplied by the respondent.

Twenty-five criteria were given as the basis for class identification, with no one criterion being mentioned more than eleven times. Fourteen persons mentioned factors usually associated with economic status, but thirty-eight did not mention any criterion related to economics. Other criteria frequently named were: church membership (9), education (8), family (6), participation in community affairs (5), and length of residence in the community (5).

Since most of the names of class constituents had been volunteered only once, a second phase of the study was prepared which would present a list of names of families for stratification to an area sample of raters.

The nominees from the first sample were divided into family dwelling groups. All dwelling groups with the same surname who had members with conflicting ratings were discarded. Because of the excessive proportion of high status ratings, all top stratum families who had received only one nomination were eliminated. The resulting list contained the names of forty-nine families. At least one member of each family had been nominated as a typical member of some social stratum, and none of the families had members who had been assigned conflicting statuses. If a clear-cut stratification pattern were conceptualized by the community of Citrus City in general, its elements should be discernible from the assignments of these families to social strata.

Raters were chosen by essentially the same technique as was used for choosing respondents in the first series of interviews. Thirty-five addresses were selected at regularly spaced intervals on the City Engineer's map. The number thirty-five was chosen after the pattern set by Hollingshead, who invited thirty-five persons to act as raters in his study of a community of 6,200.[3]

From the initial list of thirty-five addresses, twenty-five sets of ratings were

[3] Hollingshead, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

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obtained. The persons who made these ratings had been asked to separate the cards into groups of families with similar "social standing" in Citrus City.

The tabulation of the data posed a problem since the number of strata identified by the raters varied from two to five. The calculation of an arithmetic mean score for each family based on the assumption of regularly-spaced intervals would have been a simple matter, but such a mathematical exercise would have been unrelated to the problem.

The arithmetic mean of assigned scores would be irrelevant on two counts. First, there is no basis for the assumption that strata are regularly spaced. Even if such an assumption were made, there would be no assurance that each rater conceptualized identical extreme poles. For these reasons, it is not likely that the ratings can be thought of as commensurable. Second, the mean rating might be quite distinct from a consensus rating, particularly since raters probably differentiated between subjects on qualitative rather than quantitative bases (a speculation supported by the nature of the criteria listed in the first series of interviews).

Whatever the basis for a rater's opinion of a subject may be, there are no grounds for assuming that his rating must be commensurable with ratings made by any other person.

The rating of each subject by each rater was expressed in terms of a ratio of two incommensurable designators. The denominator of the ratio, expressed as an arabic numeral, indicates the number of strata used by each rater. The numerator, expressed as a letter of the alphabet, indicates the stratum to which each subject has been assigned. Thus a rating of A/5 indicates that a subject has been assigned to the highest stratum designated by a rater who divided all of the subjects into five strata. A rating of C/4 indicates that a subject has been assigned to the third stratum (counting from the top) of a system comprised of four strata.

When all of the ratings of one subject are arranged in the form of a triangular matrix, lines of accumulation (or the lack of them) may be observed. Such a matrix was prepared for each of the forty-nine families.

The matrices were sorted into five categories: (1) consistent, (2) border, (3) dispersed, (4) controversial, and (5) too few ratings to classify.

A matrix was adjudged consistent when the line of accumulation passed through the highest strata of each system, the lowest strata, or intermediate strata. Where the central tendency of the distribution was clearly evident, a few deviant ratings were allowed. In no case did the number of deviations exceed one-third of the total number of ratings in a matrix adjudged consistent.

Matrices were classified as border when the line of accumulation fell between adjacent strata with more than one-third of the ratings falling into each of the adjacent strata. The border matrices did not necessarily represent families who were socially mobile or whose status was in any way less stable than families with consistent ratings.

Patterns were adjudged dispersed when they contained ratings which were widely distributed among the strata without any discernible central tendency.

Controversial matrices were those containing two distinct lines of accumulation.

Twenty of the matrices were classified as consistent, seven as border, fourteen as dispersed, three as controversial, and five had too few ratings to categorize.

FINDINGS

No generally used verbal reactions by means of which persons were identified with social strata in Citrus City were found. There appear to be no acknowledged uniform criteria for the inclusion of persons within, or their exclusion from, given strata.

There was no generally recognized number of social strata in Citrus City. In the first series of interviews, the number of social strata indicated by respondents ranged from one to seven, with no one number being agreed upon by more than

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seventeen per cent of the respondents. In the second series, where a prepared list of families was separated into strata by the informants, the number of strata ranged from two to five, with no one number being chosen by more than thirty-two per cent of the respondents.

Fifty-five per cent of the families selected for stratification in Citrus City were assigned well defined statuses. These families were consistently placed within closely delimited vertical status ranges by the informants.

A few families in Citrus City had controversial statuses. Six per cent of the subject families were assigned substantial numbers each of high and low ranks without any intermediate ratings. This probably reflected the use of different rating criteria by different informants.

Many families were characterized by such a wide variety of status assignments that no satisfactory conclusion could be drawn about their general statuses in the community. Twenty-nine per cent of the subject families received ratings from the highest through the lowest strata supplied by the respondents, even though they appeared to be fairly well known in Citrus City. On the average, each family in this group was ranked by forty-two per cent of the informants.[4]

Ten per cent of the subject families received ratings from fewer than fifteen per cent of the informants. These families were not classified.

It may be concluded from this study that either (1) a considerable number of families in Citrus City are not identified with any particular social stratum, or (2) that rigorous social stratification patterns do exist, but are clearly conceptualized only by some special category of community members.

One conclusion of the study is inevitable if the method and its execution are conceded to be sound: *social strata in Citrus City are not rigorously distinguished by the general population.*

[4] Dispersed matrices may have resulted either from the use of different criteria by the raters or from the inclusion of unreliable raters. Examination of the raw data showed that a range of from nineteen per cent to sixty per cent of the individual informants' ratings fell into dispersed matrices. The average number of ratings per informant falling into such patterns was thirty-two per cent. As an experiment, new matrices were prepared for the families who had dispersed patterns, eliminating the ratings of all informants who had over one-third of their ratings falling into dispersed patterns. Oniy two of the matrices were changed to consistent. This was interpreted as a confirmation of the reliability of the informants in question.

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